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Strengthening of the coordination of humanitarian and disaster relief assistance of the United Nations, including special economic assistance

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Items 5, 10, 13 and 14 of the provisional agenda*

Special economic, humanitarian and disaster relief assistance

Regional cooperation

Economic and environmental questions

Social and human rights questions

Letter dated 28 May 2003 from the Permanent Representative of Chile to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to transmit herewith the outcome of the XVII Inter-American Conference on equity in health, road to development, held under the joint sponsorship of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies and the Government of Chile in Santiago, Chile, from 23 to 26 April 2003. The attached resolution contains the Santiago de Chile Commitment and the Guidelines for the Plan of Action of the XVII Inter-American Conference (see annex).

As the representative of the host country, and on behalf of the organizers of the Conference, I should be grateful if you could arrange for the present letter and its annex to be circulated as a document of the fifty-seventh session of the General Assembly, under agenda item 21, and of the Economic and Social Council, under agenda items 5, 10, 13 and 14.

(*Signed*) Juan Gabriel **Valdés**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

* E/2003/100.

03-38220 (E) 100603

Annex to the letter dated 28 May 2003 from the Permanent Representative of Chile to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

[Original: English and Spanish]

XVII INTER-AMERICAN CONFERENCE OF THE RED CROSS SANTIAGO DE CHILE, 23-26 April 2003

- Resolution –

The Santiago de Chile Commitment and the XVII Inter-American Conference Plan of Action

The XVII Inter-American Conference, held in Santiago de Chile, from April 23rd to 26th under the motto *"Equity in health, road to development"*;

Recalling the Declaration of Santo Domingo adopted by the XVI Inter-American Conference,

Conscious of the Plan of Action for Latin-America and the Caribbean,

Confirming our commitment to the Strategy 2010, the Strategy for the Movement and the Plan of Action of the International Conference,

This Conference,

Expresses great concern about life, health and safety of the civil population caused by armed conflicts and calls for strict observation of the Geneva Conventions, the additional Protocols and the Principles of International Humanitarian Law by all concerned.

AND

Further calls upon all governments to take steps to ensure the safety of all humanitarian workers in areas of armed conflict and take measures to reduce the growing equity gap.

This Conference,

Reaffirms its belief in the Principles of the Red Cross Movement as important values in the preservation of life and human dignity.

Takes note and *approves* the report on the implementation of the Plan of Action for Latin America and the Caribbean, the work of the simultaneous seminars, the work done by the working groups on health and disasters and the background documents, acknowledges their combined contribution for the success of the Conference and recommends their incorporation in the XVII Inter-American Conference Plan of Action.

This Conference further:

a. *Adopts* the "Commitment of Santiago de Chile" included as Annex 1.

b. *Adopts* the general guidelines of the Plan of Action of the XVII Inter-American Conference included as Annex 2 and requests the CORI to complete the document within three months.

c. *Encourages* the members to implement actions consistent with the spirit of the Commitment of Santiago de Chile and with the future Plan of Action.

d. *Urges* members of the Inter-American Conference to report, through the CORI, regarding progress on the implementation of the Plan of Action at the XVIII Inter-American Conference.

e. *Congratulates* the Chilean Red Cross, its executives and volunteers, for its centenary and expresses gratitude for its warm hospitality and the excellent organization of the Conference.

Annex 1: The Santiago de Chile Commitment

Annex 2: Guidelines for the Plan of Action of the XVII Inter-American Conference

THE SANTIAGO DE CHILE COMMITMENT

The National Societies of the Red Cross of the Americas, meeting in Santiago de Chile in April 2003 with the objective to determine our future priorities, identify the need to urgently address the growing vulnerability of our region caused by poverty, disasters and inequities in health.

HEALTH

Health indicators in Latin America have generally improved, but increasing disparities exist between the countries of the region and between different population groups within each country. Health indicators clearly establish that health status is directly related both to poverty and to the equitable distribution of income. On both scales gaps are increasing at a disturbing rate. This situation particularly affects women, children, elderly people, disabled persons as well as geographically isolated populations.

Confronted with these humanitarian challenges, the National Societies of the Red Cross commit themselves to:

1. Establish national strategies and programmes that identify inequity in health.

2. Ensure greater synergy amongst the different health-related programmes and with community based disaster preparedness programmes and organizational development.

3. Strengthen four areas that possess the greatest potential for increasing the impact on public health and serve to integrate the actions of the National Societies. These four areas are:

a) Social mobilization through community education and the promotion of voluntary non-remunerated blood donation.

b) Women and Child Health, remaining conscious that these must eliminate gender differences. In addition, we commit to develop and implement the Integrated Management of Childhood Illnesses (IMCI) strategy at the community level.

c) Response to HIV/AIDS with interventions designed to overcome stigma and discrimination, to ensure access to medications, to prevent new infections and to initiate home and community care activities where appropriate.

d) Response to public health in emergencies through developing intervention plans for natural disasters, environmental emergencies, emerging and re-emerging diseases and situations of armed conflict and violence including the areas of hygiene, water and sanitation, nutrition, psycho-social health and temporary shelters.

4. Convey our message of tolerance and non-violence and promote non-discrimination. We will urge our governments to ensure respect of basic rights for all people living in our region without exception.

5. Promote the alleviation of the difficulties experienced by migrant and displaced populations and affirm that all individuals are entitled to basic human rights including the right to health.

DISASTERS

Over the last decade, large-scale natural disasters often related to climatic change, have greatly impacted development in the poorest countries in the Americas. These events are compounded by daily, "invisible" and human created disasters, in particular armed violence, which cumulatively result in losses far greater than those arising from the more visible causes.

Confronted with these humanitarian and institutional challenges, the National Societies of the Red Cross commit themselves to:

6. Consolidate and develop an integrated disaster management system through strengthening planning mechanisms and establishing appropriate standards and procedures.

7. Consolidate, extend, update and develop community disaster-preparedness education programmes. This will be done through the development of integrated activities in order to increase impact at the community level.

8. Strengthen local organizations and Red Cross branches in all National Societies through the development of disaster plans and disaster response preparedness, both of which are co-ordinated with appropriate government agencies.

9. Incorporate rehabilitation, reconstruction and development actions starting at the preliminary disaster-response phase, based on vulnerability and risk analysis. These actions should be focused on the general objective of achieving greater development in disaster-affected communities and not simply a return to pre-disaster conditions.

10. Promote a better understanding, and commitment to national and international disaster law among respective governments in order to facilitate better disaster prevention, preparedness and response.

CAPACITY

In order to meet our health and disaster goals, we need to increase our capacities. As such, the National Societies of the Americas commit themselves to:

11. Strengthen the community volunteer network in order to sustain large-scale programmes through the development of appropriate volunteer management systems.

12. Ensure well-balanced participation in our organization of people from all sectors of society reflecting the diversity of our communities with particular emphasis on gender balance.

13. Recognize the inherent right for meaningful participation of young people in civil society and commit to providing the necessary space for this participation in decision making within the Movement. Implement strategies and programmes that address the special

vulnerability of young people recognizing the magnitude, relevance, complexity and urgency of problems associated with youth violence.

14. Improve internal and external communication as well as dissemination of International Humanitarian Law.

15. Strengthen links between the Red Cross, organizations of people living with HIV/AIDS, Ministries of Health and the corporate sector.

16. Mobilize resources and develop long-term appropriate partnerships with the public and corporate sectors as part of an overall strategy towards sustainability.

We commit ourselves to implement the Plan of Action with the conviction that it will require special efforts at the national and international levels. We hope that our sister National Societies, the Secretariat of the Federation and the ICRC will support these initiatives in a co-ordinated and sustainable manner based on our National Development Plans.

We will appeal to our governments, and regional and national organizations to support us in our commitment.

We recognize that the impact of the decisions made by the XVII Inter American Conference will depend on remaining engaged in a process of careful and ongoing monitoring and evaluation. This must be based on the spirit of partnership between National Societies and the communities, governments, organizations and institutions that share our concerns. It is with this spirit that we commit ourselves.

General Guidelines for the Plan of Action of the XVII Inter-American Conference

1. - Content of the Plan of Action:

- **The starting point is the *" Santiago de Chile Commitment".***
  - The C*ommitment* defines the "what"
  - The *Plan of Action* defines the "how"

- **In addition, we build on the framework of:**

- Strategic documents of the Movement: S*trategy 2010, Strategy of the Movement* and the *Plan of Action of the International Conference.*

- Specific documents from the region, (developed during both the preparatory phase and the Conference itself) with the active participation of the National Societies:

a) Report on the Implementation of the Plan of Action for Latin America and the Caribbean

b) Conference working documents:
- *"Reducing risks and improving coordination: Towards an integral disaster-management system in the Americas".*
- *"Equity and health in the Americas: The Red Cross initiative to increase health equity and strengthen local capacities in the Americas".*

c) Conclusions of the simultaneous seminars:
- Youth violence
- Migration
- Partnership with the corporate sector

d) Summary of the discussion of the health and disaster working groups.

2. - Process for the Plan of Action:

The CORI, with the support of the Federation Secretariat, will draft a *Plan of Action,* to be submitted for the consideration of all Conference members within three months period.

The process will require:

a) The active participation of the National Societies in the preparation of the Plan of Action.
b) Clear strategies, coherent with the commitment coming from the XVII Inter-American Conference.
c) A precise Plan of Action.
d) A strong CORI, able to coordinate, support and follow up the implementation of the Plan of Action.
e) Support from sister National Societies, the Federation Secretariat and the ICRC.
f) Strategic alliances with other organizations.